

VIDEO SYNOPSIS: **Harley Refsal**

Introduction by Riki Saltzman

- :20 Riki Saltzman introduces herself as Folk Life Coordinator for the Iowa Arts Council Department of Cultural Affairs, part of state government. Ms. Saltzman and her staff work with individuals and communities to document, preserve, and present their traditions.
- :45 She describes presenting crafts, music, and dance as some of the traditions, at folk life festivals, on radio shows, and on two on-line folk life curricula.
- 1:04 Each of the five folk artists is briefly shown as Ms. Saltzman describes their craft or art.

Harley Refsal

- 1:43 The exterior of a beautiful Iowa building is shown, the Vesterheim Norwegian American Museum in Decorah, Iowa.
The narrator speaks: "Harley Refsal is of Norwegian heritage and is not only a professor of art at Luther College, he is a traditional wood carver in a very specific Norwegian tradition called flat plane carving."
- 1:58 Mr. Refsal speaks while he carves a figure. He states that he teaches a course called Scandinavian Fine Handcraft, and that he has been carving since the late 1960's. He holds up the figure he is working on, next to a completed figure to show what it will look like, and points out that he is wearing a Kevlar glove to prevent injury.
- 3:00 He explains the degree of difficulty and getting started in carving by showing how the figure he holds, with a face, might be too much to tackle in the beginning. He shows how a more stylized figure of a horse would be quite possible for a beginner. He is carving with basswood. Starting out with a potato, carrot, or rutabaga would be good choices.
- 3:40 Mr. Refsal says that if a person wants to carve with wood, it's advisable to have as sharp a knife as possible. A close-up of the whittling shows Mr. Refsal using both hands in the carving, which he emphasizes. The left hand holds the wood, but the left thumb helps to push the knife that is held in the right hand.
- 4:42 "These handcrafts, whether it be knife making, carving, textile traditions, used to be passed on from father to son, mother to daughter, grandmother to granddaughter," he states. But now that doesn't really happen, so these traditional crafts must be learned in a more academic setting. He gets the most out of courses in which the students are there because they want to be, not because they have to be.
- 5:42 A student is shown holding a knife she made with a wooden handle. Mr. Refsal congratulates her on making a beautiful piece. He states: "The point is, have I created an object that I am very proud of, that I'm going to enjoy and use my whole life. That's what's important."
- 6:00 A grouping of objects is shown, including some of the pieces Mr. Refsal was carving.
- 6:07 End of Harley Refsal section